

OPERATING PRINCIPLES OF SHORELINE SCHOOL BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT

September 2006

INTRODUCTION

The members of the Shoreline Board of Directors and Superintendent of Shoreline Public Schools are committed to working together as a team. We will build on the tradition of excellence in education that has characterized our schools.

Working effectively as a team requires a healthy environment with high levels of trust and respect for individuals. To promote trust, respect, and effective teamwork, we agree on these operating principles.

We will:

- Keep the focus on issues of student achievement as the centerpiece of our work together.
- Define and communicate our goals, both short- and long-term.
- Treat students, staff, the public, and each other with respect.
- Support the Superintendent and hold him/her accountable in the implementation of district goals and work.
- Communicate concerns with each other in a timely manner.
- Create opportunities for meaningful participation and input early in the decisionmaking process.
- Evaluate the work of the Board and Superintendent periodically.
- Work in partnership with the community.
- Support and encourage opportunities for open, honest communication.

ROLES OF SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD MEMBERS

We agree to the following roles and responsibilities to enable the Board and Superintendent to work effectively as a team and make good decisions in a timely manner.

The role of the **School Board** is to:

- Prioritize and keep district resources focused on student learning;
- Set policies;
- Approve the budget;
- Hire and evaluate the Superintendent;
- Listen to and represent the community;
- Be an advocate for public education;
- Be supportive of students, staff, and administration;
- Support participation and involvement in decisionmaking;
- Direct concerns or criticisms to the Superintendent in a timely manner; and
- Support actions taken by the board and clearly differentiate personal opinion from board decisions when speaking in the minority.

The role of the School Board is not to:

- Carry out policies or micro-manage;
- Create surprises;
- Abdicate board responsibility; or
- Press narrow personal agendas;
- As individuals, make promises that would appear to be binding upon the Board and/or District.

The role of the **Superintendent** is to:

- Provide recommendations and implement board policy;
- Build a positive environment throughout the district;
- Serve as a resource to the Board;
- Act as the primary district communicator;
- Provide support, leadership, and vision for the district;
- Bring options and recommendations to the Board;
- Ensure district and staff accountability;
- Be the “day-to-day” decisionmaker; and
- Manage and delegate the work of the district.

The role of the Superintendent is not to:

- Make policies;
- Create surprises;
- Assume board responsibilities;
- Press narrow personal agendas;
- Be the sole spokesperson for the Board; or
- Discourage open discussion and feedback.

COMMUNICATIONS

The ability to clearly communicate is likely the most single important aspect of a successful relationship. School board members provide a critical link among schools, parents, and the community. With their involvement in school and community issues, school board members are uniquely positioned to listen to input/concerns/suggestions of all the people who have a stake in education. We hold the belief that we must work with the schools and the community for good results.

Regular communication between the Superintendent and the members of the school board is crucial. Various communication strategies fall into three categories: personal interactions, telephone contacts, or written/e-mail information.

Personal Interactions: Opportunities for informal and formal interactions should be provided. The Board President and Superintendent shall meet on a weekly basis. The Superintendent is encouraged to call or meet with individual board members every few weeks to provide an opportunity to dialogue.

Telephone Contacts: When emergencies occur, the telephone is the best tool for instant communication to all board members. The Board President and Superintendent are also encouraged to confer by telephone on issues as they arise or develop.

Written/e-mail Information: To keep the board members informed on operational matters, the Superintendent can send correspondence, bulletins, or e-mail messages. Weekly correspondence or e-mail messages outlining major events and activities keeps everyone informed. When issues/circumstances arise which may be of interest to the Board, e-mail is particularly suited to distributing consistent and timely information.

- **Friday briefings** from the Superintendent will be sent to the board members; this will help keep board members informed on important events/activities that happened during the week. Weekly mailings will include time sensitive materials and be part of the Friday briefings.
- **Weekly mailings** from the Superintendent will also be sent to the board members; this will include copies of letters directed to the board members that are received and other information that would be beneficial.
- A **packet of information** sent by the board clerk will be mailed to the board members; this packet would include copies of school bulletins, magazines, information from various organizations, etc. This information will be included in the board folders.

PLANNING

The Superintendent and the Board should plan together yearly objectives and goals. The Board adopts the yearly objectives and goals for the district by which the Board provides direction for the Superintendent. The Superintendent oversees the implementation of the objectives and goals throughout the entire organization.

ASSESSMENT

The Superintendent and the Board will assess the work of the school district at sessions scheduled throughout the year. Periodic assessments of the board-adopted objectives and goals for the purpose of accountability will take place.

COMMUNITY AND/OR EMPLOYEE CONTACTS

When the board members are contacted by a staff or community member, either by phone, e-mail, or other correspondence, we will

1. Listen to the comments;
2. Inform the individual of the appropriate channels regarding the issue. Assist them by informing the individual of the correct procedures to resolve the issue;
and
3. Inform the Superintendent of the relevant issue.

When issues and/or communications are received that may impact district policies or operations, the Superintendent will keep the Board appropriately informed.

The substance of anonymous complaints that may impact district policies or operations should be shared between the Board and Superintendent even though they cannot be investigated.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Without exception, all information received and/or discussed in executive sessions will remain confidential. Information given in confidence, particularly when planning and exploring alternatives within the confines and laws that determine executive privileged information must also remain confidential.

Public debate and information, while being open and honest, must not disclose information held to be confidential as defined by executive session laws.

DISTRICT NEGOTIATORS, ATTORNEYS, AND CONSULTANTS

The Superintendent or his/her designee is the contact with the district's attorneys, consultants, or negotiators. If the Board needs to consult with the district's attorney, consultant, or negotiator, the Board, by majority action, may request such a meeting.

The Board President, on behalf of the Board, may contact the district's attorney in reference to the superintendent's contract and share that information with the other board members.

THE MEDIA

The Superintendent or his/her designee is responsible for communicating official district positions to the media. There are occasions when the Board President is contacted by the media and may communicate the Board's or District's position.

Individual board members may state personal positions to the media as long as they make it known they are not speaking on behalf of the Board or the District.

SITE VISITATIONS

Board members are welcome in all schools and facilities at any time. A developed protocol for board members' visitations will be developed by the principals and uniformly applied.

AGENDA SETTING PROCESS FOR REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS

The Board President and Vice President will hold agenda conferences with the Superintendent prior to each board meeting. If a board member wishes to have an item placed on the board meeting agenda for discussion or action, the Superintendent and/or Board President should be advised prior to these conferences.

Significant issues not set on the agenda or addendum will not be presented by either the board members or administration with the exception of announcements that require no action by the Board.

Before each meeting, the board members will read all available agenda materials and may contact the superintendent or appropriate senior staff member prior to the meeting if clarification is needed. Each agenda item requiring action by the Board and all reports to the Board will be accompanied by appropriate information provided by the Superintendent in the board folders. The board folders will be delivered at least four days prior to the board meeting to allow board members time to study the agenda items.

DECISIONMAKING

For good decisions to be made, there must be: clear definition of and focus on issues, adherence to a clearly defined process, involvement of those affected early in discussions, development of alternative solutions, and recommendations for actions consistent with district goals. Final decisions will consider educational research, proven practices, and community input in making decisions.

We agree to work with each other in an open, honest manner and to disagree respectfully.

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION CODE OF GOVERNANCE

We subscribe to the Washington State School Board Association (WSSDA) Code of Governance (adopted 1971; Amended 1982, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1994 and 1999).

Beliefs:

We believe each individual board member is responsible to:

- Be fully prepared and work within the board's structure;
- Make decisions to ensure equal access to public education;
- Acknowledge that an effective board must be composed of members who respect its processes and recognize dissenting viewpoints;
- Respect the professional expertise of district staff as necessary for the operation of effective schools;
- Recognize that schools thrive in a community where there is an atmosphere of mutual respect;
- Support actions taken by the board and clearly differentiate personal opinion from board decisions when speaking in the minority;
- Make decisions to ensure the rights and welfare of all students;
- Make decisions that respect and accommodate diversity;
- Maintain independent judgment free of special interests and partisan political groups and avoid the use of schools for personal gain;
- Promote environments that meet the educational needs of all students;
- Recognize that effective internal and external communications are an essential part of our public schools and the role of a school board member;
- Consider educational research, proven practices, and community input in making decisions;
- Be accountable for personal actions;
- Work cooperatively with other board members, the staff, and the community; and
- Understand his/her role in making, monitoring, and evaluating school policies; and
- Be sensitive to how independent statements or actions of a board member may be perceived.

Knowledge and Skills:

We believe that successful school board members will acquire the knowledge/skills necessary to:

- Understand the state's laws and regulations and their district's policies and procedures and contractual obligations which govern the operations of schools;
- Recognize that their school board authority to act can be exercised only when participating in an official meeting of the board;
- Hold confidential from the public, including families and friends, all matters discussed in executive session;
- Accept the appropriate roles of the board and superintendent in the operation of the school district;
- Strategically plan for the schools' short, intermediate, and long-range futures; enact policies to ensure fair, efficient and effective operations; monitor - not manage - the implementation of plans and policies and evaluate the district's educational effectiveness;
- Develop interdependent relationships based on collaboration with other school board members, boards, other educational policy makers and appropriate agencies which will improve public education; and
- Keep abreast of important developments in educational trends, research, and practices.